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Beethoven's Nationality

Author(s): T. Francis Howell

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musicians of almost every civilised country have been brought together under a single banner. If the widely-laid foundations have not yet been fully built upon, that is the most that can be said in derogation of the scheme; and the scheme remains an excellently-thought-out one, doing credit to its founder. (b) Owing to a cumulative defect of editorial organization, of which the Central Executive is quite conscious, and which it means to take the first opportunity to mend, the Society's polyglot publications have gradually tended to become too narrow in their purview. But accepting that purview for what it is, the publications have, I believe, been recognized as the best in existence of their kind. (c) In respect of its Congresses, the Society can surely boast success without fear of detracting. It has held five Congresses in five countries: at Leipsic, Basle, Vienna, London, and Paris. With the growth of the Society the last three have been the most notable. Each Congress has had its own particular merit, but the charge of the Society 'never having been a strong body' comes with a specially bad grace from this country, considering the character of the London Congress of 1911. Assuredly nowhere, and on no occasion, have musicians met with such open-hearted, widely-spread, and thoroughly successful hospitality as was given here to representatives of all countries. We may really hold that there was 'the courteous host and all-approving guest.' The City vied with the West End. The Government for the first time in history entertained musicians to a quasi-banquet in the House of Commons, a member of the Cabinet presiding. The *éclat* of the Congress was such that 222 new members then and there joined the Society, of whom nearly all have been retained. The life and soul of the London Congress was that extremely able administrator and very lovable personage, Alfred Henry Littleton, whose death we are now deploring.

As regards the statement that 'the president of the German branch has resigned,' all that is known here is as follows: Prof. Hermann Kretzschmar, Director of the Berlin Royal High School of Music, was general president of the Society for two biennial periods from 1904 to 1908; and has been till now president of the North-German National Section (the other four such within the German Empire being Baden, Bavaria, Saxony, and South-West Germany). At a Paris Congress meeting of the governing body held on June 3, 1914, Prof. Kretzschmar was nominated to be general president for two years from October 1, 1914. He accepted the nomination on July 15, 1914. Nothing remained to complete that transaction except a formal written vote by the entire governing body. At the Paris Congress it was also decided to hold the next Congress at Berlin in 1916. On August 4, 1914, war was declared between England and Germany. On September 5, 1914, a 'Copenhagen despatch' contained a paragraph regarding the Society (reproduced in *Musical America* of October 10, 1914), which included the remark that 'Prof. Kretzschmar and other officials have resigned, and have appealed to German musicians to form a Society exclusively for themselves.' At the end of September, 1914, the Society's Monthly Journal for September was issued at Leipsic, omitting from the wrapper the usual list of national sections and local branches; this may have been due either to Press-censorship or to the action above alleged. Nothing further is known. Comment does not seem desirable on facts so imperfectly ascertained. But it may perhaps be pointed out, first, that all German professors are Government officials; and, secondly, that it is more consonant with the German than with the English character to yield to the emotions on such occasions. These secessions, made as early as the month of August, seem at any rate to have been of a precipitate nature.

May I state, in conclusion, that as regards members in this country they are not being asked for subscriptions from October 1, 1914, or until there is some valid *quid pro quo* to offer to them. But they are invited to retain their membership, relying on the assurance already mentioned in this letter, that the responsible officers are keeping open the *cadre* of the Society, and decidedly mean to maintain it in existence, especially with a view to its international characteristics.—Yours faithfully,

CHARLES MACLEAN.

November 23, 1914.

BEETHOVEN'S NATIONALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—The present moment seems opportune for raising the question of what nationality was Beethoven, and I do so in the hope of eliciting an authoritative pronouncement.

Undoubtedly the general impression is that Ludwig van (sometimes wrongly written 'von') Beethoven was a German, who was born at Bonn (in 1770) and died at Vienna (in 1827). It will suffice to give an example of this. In the epilogue of the late Emil Reich's 'Germany's swelled head' (1914 edition, at p. 172), is written, 'Of course, no one denies that the world is heavily indebted to the race which has produced Leibnitz, Bach, Lessing, Kant, Niebuhr, Savigny, Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven,' &c. (Kant, by the way, believed himself to be of Scotch antecedents.) Should Beethoven's name be included in this list? Is he one of the builders-up of German 'Kultur'?

In Sir C. Villiers Stanford's recently-published book, 'Pages from an unwritten diary,' Beethoven is thus referred to (at p. 56): '... the immortal Netherlander, wrongly termed a German from the accident of his birth in the Rhineland. (He was no more German than César Franck was French.)'

In a 'Biographical dictionary of musicians' (1900, compiled and edited by Theodore Baker, Ph.D.) we read of Beethoven that 'his grandfather, Ludwig van B., a native of Maestricht, was bass singer, opera-composer, and *Kapellur* at Bonn to the Elector Clemens August. B.'s father, Johann van B., was a tenor singer in the Electoral Choir: he married Maria Magdalena Laym (*née* Keverich), the widow of the chief cook at Ehrenbreitstein; and Ludwig was the second child born to them.'

By way of comment on this quotation from Baker's 'Dictionary,' it should be pointed out that according to the article on Beethoven in 'Grove,' vol. i. (1904), the father's name was Johann or Jean, that the mother was the daughter (not widow) of the chief cook, and was at the time of her marriage to Johann van Beethoven a widow by name Leym or Laym.

The 'Grove' article is headed 'Beethoven, Ludwig van,' and to the word 'van' there is the following footnote: 'Van in Dutch is not, like *von* or *de*, a sign of nobility. On the attempts to assign a Dutch origin to the composer, see a *Lettre à M. le Bourgmestre de Bonn, contenant les prénoms de l'origine hollandaise de L. v. Beethoven*, Amsterdam, 1837.'

Is not the inference from this footnote that the writer thinks such attempts have been unsuccessful?

In the body of the article it is said that 'the family belonged originally to a village near Louvain; thence in 1650 they moved to Antwerp, where in 1680 the name appears in the registers.'

Was, then, Beethoven of Dutch or Flemish ancestry; and was he of German origin on his mother's side only?—Yours faithfully,

T. FRANCIS HOWELL.

22, Stafford Terrace,
Kensington, W.,
December 7, 1914.

[A discussion in the *Birmingham Daily Post* on the above point has been one of the minor alleviations of life during last month. The question is, Whence does a man derive his national label: from his father, his grandfathers, his mother, his grandmothers, the place where he happens to be born, his artistic environment, or the country of his adoption? The chief hereditary character of Beethoven was Flemish, and all else was what we now label German. But even so, it is a moot point whether Beethoven created German music or German music created Beethoven.—ED., M. T.]

MR. NEWMAN ON FORM AND COMPOSITION.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—The hardy individual who sets out to comment on any of Mr. Newman's articles is generally made to look excessively foolish before that gentleman has finished with him. Nevertheless, he serves a useful function. I have read the letters which have appeared on the above subject